

## THE ARMY OFFICER: RECRUIT, ACCESS, AND RETAIN

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE ARMY OFFICER: RECRUIT, ACCESS, AND RETAIN**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The Army, in its effort to achieve the proper mix of leaders in the form of commissioned officers, must develop and execute a synchronized strategy for recruiting, accessioning, and retaining officers; an enterprise solution which incorporates ways and means to achieve the desired ends. Currently, the Army relies on three separate and distinct stove piped and uncoordinated methodologies to achieve the requisite number of officers with the appropriate grade and skill needed to accomplish its mission. This has resulted in gaps and seams that can be closed if it incorporates a holistic, comprehensive approach to recruiting officer candidates, accessing them according to the needs of the Army, and retaining them based upon quality and desired skills for its officer corps.



## THE ARMY OFFICER: RECRUIT, ACCESS, AND RETAIN

The United States Army does not currently have a synchronized, integrated officer recruiting, accession, and retention strategy that will enable it to have the officer leadership required of the Army of the future. The Means the Army currently uses to achieve its desired Ends are not woven together or incorporated in an overarching strategy in regards to its officer corps. The Army has three commissioning sources that provide the seed corn for its future leaders. The United States Military Academy (USMA), the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS) provide the Army with the lion's share of active duty officers to lead its organization. Unfortunately the methodology for allocating resources, assigning missions, and actually commissioning 2LTs from these three sources is not centrally managed and executed by a single authority or within a fused command structure that ensures a unity of effort. Because the Army has been slow to recognize that retention also plays a determining role in the future stability, viability, and overall health of the officer corps; the Army has only recently emphasized retention of company grade officers as being fundamental to the overall health and viability of its officer corps. Retention cannot be merely looked at by rank across the Army, our leaders need to be very concerned that the Army is retaining the right type of officers as well; not only by skill or branch but by individual cohort as well. The operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of not only the military, but particularly the Army in the past twenty years shows no indication of declining. Our nation's leaders, as well as our military leaders, must recognize and fight for the ability to produce and maintain quality leaders in this Army if the nation expects to retain its position at the top of the world order. This is a strategic

issue given the necessity of the reliance on military power in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001. The Army has an opportunity to reevaluate and make the necessary adjustments to the processes of recruiting, accessing, and retaining its officer corps and to view them as one enterprise, not three separate and distinct endeavors. Many experts believe America's foreign policy in recent years, has taken on the face of the military. The velvet glove of diplomacy more often than not has been taken off to reveal the iron fist of military power to execute foreign policy. That fist to achieve our national interests has recently borne the face of the United States Army. The peace dividend that our nation looked forward to after the collapse of the former Soviet Union was never fully realized. The rapid drawdown of America's military proved problematic in that the United States' ability to project its agenda globally, particularly after September 2001, was severely hampered. The shift from a bi-polar world to a uni-polar world did not correlate to American global hegemony; without another true super power to not only check America's power, but to also help maintain world order, resulted in a multi-polar world. This new world order has necessitated a strong military. As foreign policy more frequently has a military face, the current and future leadership of American foreign policy resides in the Army's officer corps. It's not coincidental that in the last 20 years, the execution of American foreign policy has borne the face of men like General Norman Schwarzkopf in Saudi Arabia, General Eric Shinseki and General Wesley Clark in the Balkans, Generals' Tommy Franks, John Abizaid, Ricardo Sanchez, Dan McKiernan, Dave Petraeus and Raymond Odierno in Afghanistan and Iraq. These are Army officers who are the product of how we recruit, access, and retain leaders of our professional, all-volunteer Army. The Army must come up with a coherent and

synchronized recruiting, accession and retention strategy that will ensure the Army has such leaders of the highest caliber in the future.

### Recruiting

In keeping with the adage that one must start with the end in mind, the Army's synchronized strategy should begin with how it approaches recruiting for the officer corps. Producing an Army officer starts with recruiting candidates. Recruiting is the first Means the Army incorporates to establish its officer corps. The Army needs to coordinate its officer recruiting efforts across all commissioning sources before it can ever hope to have a cohesive accessions or retention strategy.<sup>1</sup> USMA has its own full time recruiters; although small in number they enjoy the strategic value of unity of effort. USMA also has part time recruiters or Military Academy Liaison Officers (MALOs), who are reserve officers that receive retirement points for their recruiting efforts and are focused almost entirely on recruiting for and promoting USMA throughout the United States, even though they are missioned to recruit and promote ROTC as well. USMA also has an extremely active alumni association which is part of a nation wide network of USMA graduates throughout the country concentrated locally in organized societies in all the larger metropolitan areas and in every state; these societies contribute greatly to the West Point recruiting effort. The ROTC recruiting effort relies primarily on assistant professors of military science who are given an additional duty as recruiting operations officers (ROOs). ROOs are generally focused on a specific campus and recruit specifically for the ROTC program to which they are assigned. They do not enjoy unity of effort nor are they focused strategically, but rather they are tactically engaged. ROTC also relies on a small portion of the Army's national advertising

campaign to communicate their scholarship opportunities. OCS depends heavily on the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) for off the street candidates, and on commanders in the Army for high potential soldiers from the active army to fill its seats. Ironically, both ROTC and USAREC are subordinate commands of the United States Army Accessions Command, but there is very little collaboration between the two.<sup>2</sup> USAREC is staffed at a very high level; it should be charged with recruiting for the entire Army to include commissioned officers for all sources of commissioning. Although the enlisted force will be its focus based purely on requirements, it should also be given and held accountable for an officer mission as well. The idea that recruiters are enlisted men managed by officers to recruit enlisted soldiers is out of synch with Army needs. USAREC should recruit officer candidates for all three major commissioning sources as well as enlisted soldiers and let the cadre at the commissioning sources focus primarily on the training of officer candidates. This new approach, in concert with the existing recruiting methodologies, would create unprecedented synergies and would be more reflective of a total United States Army Recruiting Command. The structure is in place already to accomplish this shift in culture. USAREC would require a small increase in personnel and the advertising budget would need to be re-focused or increased, possibly both. There is no reason why USAREC should not be given the mission to recruit for the entire Army, both the enlisted and officer forces. This should not occur without the appropriate resources necessary to achieve that mission. In ROTC for example, as far as manpower is concerned, the cost would be relatively small; a minimum of one recruiter, who is fully trained and qualified at each ROTC host battalion (273), for larger schools and very productive extension centers the requirement would

approach a total 400 additional trained recruiters to accomplish the mission. This approach also, in all likelihood, would yield huge production gains for the enlisted mission as well. ROTC has a substantial attrition rate and those that choose not to continue progression to a commission not only are qualified, but also have a propensity to serve; they would be prime candidates to augment production for the enlisted recruiting mission. This is a “win-win” situation for the entire Army and those assigned to this mission would realize unprecedented success in recruiting for the Army.

### Accessions

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), which is Congress’ investigative arm, says the Army currently does not have, but needs an accession strategy. “While all services have some specialty – and diversity related challenges ... based on our review the Army faces some future officer accession problems not shared by other services and has not developed and implemented a strategic plan to overcome these projected shortfalls.” Additionally the Army’s officer accessions programs are decentralized and lack any sort of formal coordination which prevents the Army from effectively balancing the results of failure in some officer accessions programs. USMA does not directly report to the same higher level command as ROTC or OCS. While ROTC and OCS report to the same overall authority, they do not formally coordinate with one another or with USMA. Also, the Army does not coordinate any recruiting or accessions efforts to ensure that accessions programs designed to meet Army accessions goals actually achieve those goals, nor does it use risk analysis to manage resource allocations amongst the programs. <sup>3</sup>

The second “means” by which the Army gets its officers is through its accessions process. As of the writing of this paper the Army still does not have a long term strategy for accessing its officers; which arguably is just one third of the solution to the problem of achieving the correct number and type of officers serving in the Army ranks. According to sources at the Army G-1 “...we have an accessions plan, but we are in the process of trying to emplace a true long range officer accession strategy. The plan simply outlines the targets by component and source of commission for the next 5 years. It has been in a state of flux for the past three years as the Army’s modular growth and transformation have driven almost monthly changes in forecast requirements. Rather than chase our tails, we’re trying to set up a cyclical process by which we set long term goals that can guide our annual adjustments.”<sup>4</sup> The traditional approach the Army has used to meet its accession needs has been to focus on ROTC and USMA, and then compensate any shortfalls or gains from these two programs with increased or decreased production in OCS. This approach, although unchanged fundamentally, has been altered significantly in recent years,; primarily due to ROTC’s, inability to meet its overall mission. Therefore, the OCS contribution to officer accessions has tripled from prior to September, 11, 2001 to FY 2006.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that ROTC production exceeded its mission from 2003-2005<sup>6</sup> and was operating at a steady state when they received a 15% increase in their overall mission inside the timeframe it takes to produce a 2LT. This increased mission not only specified numbers required for active duty service but had a caveat to produce a specified number of officers for the ARNG and the USAR, a significant departure from previous practices and with no additional resources in the form of active duty cadre or scholarship dollars

due to budget constraints. This was problematic since the Army previously did not specify a Reserve Component mission for ROTC, and in fact allowed those who were not contractually obligated to serve in the Reserve Components to opt for active duty. With the Army's transformation to an Operational Reserve, this practice is no longer possible. Additionally, due to budget cuts, there were over 1500 fewer 4 year-scholarship recipients in FY 2005 than in FY 2003 and since scholarship recipients are more likely to complete the program, receive their commission, and serve on active duty, this further exacerbated the issue of not having the requisite number of junior officers in the pipeline.<sup>7</sup> USMA's mission and production have been relatively stable; however any increased production from this source requires a large lead time and a capital investment that requires legislative changes and costly infrastructure upgrades. Instead of ROTC producing 60%, USMA 25%, and OCS 15% of the active duty (historical estimates) cohort, the Army now finds for its active duty cohort in FY 2008 that OCS is producing nearly 35%, ROTC 46% and USMA 19%.<sup>8</sup> ROTC contribution to the active Army as a percentage has decreased while OCS contribution has increased. What has also occurred and has mightily contributed to this increased reliance on OCS for active component officers is that the Army has increased the overall ACC mission. The second reason for this is simply that ROTC could not produce its active component category (ACC) numbers; and also meet its newly quantified and enforced reserve mission. As a result the Army is forcing ROTC graduates to go into the reserve component in order to meet this mission. In fact in FY 2008 over 300 officers who wanted to go on active duty were forced into reserve duty and the numbers for FY 2009 are expected to be comparable as well. Forcing ROTC officers into service in the

reserve components was a common practice in the years leading up to the fall of the Soviet Union when ROTC was producing excess numbers of officers. Competition for active duty positions was highly selective and many officers were forced into the reserves. The Army is now mandating that ROTC spread its commissioned officers across the three components: United States Army Reserve (USAR), the Army National Guard (ARNG) and Active Army. The ARNG/USAR accession process is very dysfunctional. The ARNG does a much better job of recruiting and attracting officers from ROTC to serve in the Reserve Components than the USAR does. This policy may also have some second and third order effects on recruiting and retention efforts in the ROTC program. Some, if not many cadets who view upperclassmen in their ROTC program as role models and mentors, may see these key influencers increasingly disenfranchised with being sent to the Reserve Components against their wishes in order to satisfy requirements for the Army as a whole and may opt to leave ROTC. One important factor in this competing environment, coupled with the fact that service in the reserve component is only a part time job, is that duty often times is heavily dependent on the geographic location of the permanent job, and consideration is heavily influenced by job opportunities available in the USAR and the ARNG. Another factor in the distribution of ROTC cadets between USAR and ARNG is that the lion's share of popular branches which comprise the Maneuver, Fires, and Effects branches or those largely formerly known as Combat Arms branches are resident in the ARNG. The popularity of those branches for ROTC cadets might possibly impact the USAR's ability to attract officers of quality from ROTC programs. The methods by which officers are branched is based primarily on merit within the sources of commission, the needs of the

Army, and desires of the individual officer candidates within those sources. These three factors don't always agree. Thus the conundrum with branching for the all-volunteer Army, individuals are not guaranteed a branch or specialty before they are obligated to serve and may not be happy with the branch they get. This is inexorably linked to a larger problem the Army has with retention, but is beyond the scope of this research.

USMA is the most structured and inflexible source of commissioning. In all cases it takes a minimum of four years to complete the requirements for graduation and commissioning- in some cases it may take up to 5 years. The law sets an upper limit on the number of cadets attending West Point (roughly 1,000 per class) and thus it quite literally takes an act of congress to change that; this severely inhibits USMA's ability to respond to changing Army requirements. There is also very limited flexibility to increase the infrastructure in order to accommodate significant growth. USMA has the most straight forward branching and accessions process. By law, all graduates must serve the first 5 year part of their military commitment on active duty; there is not an option to satisfy that requirement in the reserve components.

Army ROTC commissions take 2, 3, or 4 years, depending on where cadets enter the program. This is the most flexible source of commissioning. However that doesn't mean that the command can turn on a dime and increase production significantly inside its minimum production time of 2 years plus recruiting for that increase- so three years is the absolute minimum required to impact any change in production. Cadets can be scholarship or non-scholarship recipients; they can serve simultaneously in the Army National Guard, or the Army Reserve; they can transfer to different schools, they can guarantee their service in the reserve components, and in

some cases they can be on active duty drawing full pay and allowances. Ideally the command would like all its cadets to be on scholarship. Until recently scholarship funding has been sporadic. Funding decisions are done annually when in this instance a multi- year funding cycle would ensure predictability – at least until the command starts achieving its mission and is at a steady state of production. The ROTC Cohort is composed of Cadets that complete a common course of training executed at over 270 separate ROTC detachments at host universities throughout the country and national territories. ROTC Cadet academic programs are as diverse as each academic institution and the courses of study available at those institutions, a very diverse and heterogeneous environment. The only truly common training for ROTC Cadets is at the Leader Development Assessment Course (LDAC) (what used to be called Advance Camp) which Cadets typically attend after their junior year. The fiscal year cohort consists of all those ROTC Cadets that complete their commissioning requirements and graduate during that fiscal year. ROTC Cadets are accessed for both active duty and reserve forces duty from that cohort. The number accessed for active duty is determined annually by the Department of the Army (DA) G-1. Typically the mission for active duty accessions is lower than the number of ROTC Cadets that request active duty.

As a result of its ability to produce officers in a short period of time, 90 days, compared to USMA and ROTC, OCS continues to be the Army's only alternative in the short term to meet its surging requirements for commissioned officers. With little or no expansion at USMA and declining ROTC production from 2004 thru 2007 the Army will continue to rely on OCS to grow its accession cohort.<sup>9</sup> OCS candidates for active duty

come from two sources: in service candidates who are currently enlisted soldiers and come from the active Army as a result of recommendations from commanders in the field, and from those candidates that enlist for OCS and are recruited by USAREC for the purpose of attending OCS.

An important part of the accessions processes is branching. Each sources of commission has a different branching process which often times leads to confusion and dissatisfaction. Current Army police requires 80% of males and 20% of females at West Point go into the Combat Arms branches.<sup>10</sup> There is no similar guidance or policy with regard to branching for OCS or ROTC. As part of a synchronized recruiting, accessions and retention strategy, the Army should consider implementing a branching process that is transparent and coordinated among the commissioning sources.

### Retention

In the strategic construct of ends, ways, and means – with the ends defined as having the appropriate number of commissioned officers in the proper grades with the requisite skill sets- another “means” by which the Army achieves its desired end is through retention. The Army has historically retained approximately 8.5% of its junior officers. However, currently the Army is short junior officers and must retain them at higher levels for three primary reasons: force structure changes, end strength increase, and a calculated risk taken in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union in regards to accessions. The Army’s Modular Force Initiative which resulted in the Army transforming from a division based force to a brigade centric structure saw a line officer requirement increase of over 4,000 positions; 90% of this increase represents requirements for captains and majors.<sup>11</sup> According to the CRS Report to Congress,

during the post cold war drawdown the army failed to access the proper number of officers which it was fully capable of accessing. From 1991- 1999 the Army should have accessed about 4,300 2LTs annually to sustain an end strength of 482,000. Instead the Army actually accessed between 3,605 and 4,218, in all cases below what was needed. It was not until FY 2003 that the Army set its target accession numbers to 4,500 to sustain a 482,000 member Army. By then it was too late, Army transformation had already begun and was even accelerated. When the GWOT required the Army to grow by 30,000, the problem was further exacerbated; there simply was no way the Army could expect not to have an officer shortage. The reason for the shortfall of accessions from 1992 through 1996, and consequently the shortage of majors is that the Army took a calculated risk in accessions to avoid a Reduction in Force at the field grade ranks. This attempt to meet the immediate demands of a drawdown resulted in getting burned by an unforeseeable requirement to grow quickly to meet global challenges in the new millennium furthering the argument for a synchronized recruiting, accession and retention strategy that more adequately allows for fluctuation in requirements.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the Army's accession challenges the GAO also found that the Army faces multiple retention challenges.<sup>13</sup> According to LTG Michael Rochelle, the Army G-1, its principal human resources officer, in his testimony to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel in August 2007; "The Army must increase company grade officer retention to keep up with growth driven by modularity. While the Army's FY07 attrition was projected to be equal to the 10 year average of 8.5%, we must reduce this rate to 5% if we are to sustain the growth needed to meet future requirements. A strategy focused on near, mid-term, and long-term retention will

provide not only for retention of many of the Army's best and brightest officers, but will concurrently contribute to sustained growth."<sup>14</sup> The 2007 GAO study analyzed fiscal years 2001, 2003, and 2005. In certain year groups the Army has experienced increased attrition rates among its junior officers (these year groups primarily are those which were already committed prior to September 11, 2001) particularly with those who graduated from USMA or who received ROTC scholarships. The GAO has also determined that the Army does not have a strategic plan to address these retention challenges.<sup>15</sup> Despite the Army retaining lieutenants and captains at or above its 10 year average, the data suggests that USMA graduates and ROTC scholarship recipients are leaving service at higher than normal rates. The USMA continuation rate for FY 2001 was 68 per cent and by FY 2005 it was down to 62 per cent and ROTC scholarship retention for the same years decreased by 3 per cent.<sup>16</sup> In 2007:

According to statistics compiled by West Point, of the 903 Army officers commissioned upon graduation in 2001 , nearly 46 per cent left the service last year – 35 per cent at the conclusion of their five years of required service, and another 11 per cent over the next 6 months. And more than 54 per cent of the 935 graduates in the class of 2000 had left active duty by this (2006) January, statistics show.<sup>17</sup>

Either trend in itself may not be too problematic, however; given the increased requirement for captains and majors due to growth and transformation, the decreased retention rates are cause for concern. The statistics reveal that in 2003 continuation rates were at their highest levels but that is a partially inflated number due to the Army's policy of stop loss which requires service members to serve on active duty beyond their initial contractual obligation when assigned to a unit alerted for deployment.<sup>18</sup> Additionally the lowest continuation rate or highest attrition rate for each source comes in the first year the officers were eligible to leave service (USMA -5 year mark and

ROTC scholarship- 4 year mark) which indicates the officers have decided early on to depart service. Finally, the ROTC scholarship program produces the largest number of officers of any of the commissioning sources in a given cohort, and most of those ROTC officers are eligible to leave at the 4 year mark explaining why the 4<sup>th</sup> year mark exhibited the lowest continuation rate in all the years examined.<sup>19</sup> Even though attrition is needed, and in the aggregate it appears to be steady state, this data suggests that many of the highest quality cadets (USMA graduates and ROTC scholarship winners) are not retained as junior officers. Moreover, the quality, let alone the quantity is not retained at the level LTG Rochelle suggests is necessary to meet the needs of the Army. The Congressional Research Service looked at shortages and projected shortages in July 2006 and found that the Army would be short nearly 3,000 line officers in 2007, increasing to a 3,700 shortfall in 2008, and will remain at least 3,000 short until at least 2013.<sup>20</sup> In FY08 as an example the Army thought it would be short 364 lieutenant colonels, 2,554 majors, and 798 captains who entered active duty in FYs 1991 through 2002. The way the Army determines retention needs is through personnel-fill rates for positions based on rank and branch or specialty.

Many argue that OPTEMPO as a result of the GWOT is the source of attrition or lower retention rates. In reality, according to Mark Lewis in his article in *Armed Forces & Society*, a culture gap between senior and junior officers and the perception among leaders who viewed their superiors as self serving leaders has had a huge impact on retention of quality junior officers.<sup>21</sup> This problem was identified before the onset of GWOT. COL Kevin Badger in his strategic research paper for the US Army War college indicates that senior Army leaders, in particular its Chief of Staff, General Eric C.

Shinseki, realized the Army had a retention problem prior to September, 2001 and chartered the Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study. The study found that Army culture is out of balance and the Army is not meeting the expectations of its cohorts in that junior officers are not receiving adequate leader development experiences and majors do not perceive a reasonable assurance of a future; and finally there is diminishing direct contact between senior leaders and subordinates which does not promote cohesion and inhibits trust. An undisciplined operational pace also was a source of concern, even prior to September 2001.<sup>22</sup> An article in the New York Times in April of 2000 says the Army was struggling to keep its ranks full and was moving to find ways to keep its officers. The officers often complained about confusing missions, low morale and the stress of constant separations from families which forced Army leaders to come up with plans to keep them in service. The initial raw data indicates that morale is low; there is distrust with senior officers and a general concern of whether or not missions are worth the time and effort to conduct.<sup>23</sup> In Feb 2001 the Army came up with some initiatives that they thought would increase retention, examples were: choice of assignment after the career course, obtaining a masters degree while attending the career course, and lowering the pin on time to captain which was not a retention initiative but rather a move to increase the number of captains (this is mentioned here because it had an impact on retention). In retrospect these initiatives did little to stop the exodus and as Lewis asserts may have even exacerbated the issue- particularly the pin on time reduction because officers spend less and less time in developmental assignments prior to promotion, contributing to the results of the ATLP study mentioned earlier which indicated that the Army is not

providing it's junior officers with adequate developmental experiences. Another article in the NY Times titled "Young Officers Leaving Army at a High Rate" indicates that steps taken as early as 2000-2001 have not stopped the elevated attrition rate of USMA and ROTC scholarship graduates as of April 2006. In fact over 1/3 of officers in the USMA class of 2000 left active duty as soon as their 5 year initial obligation was complete.

Compounding the problem of not having enough officers to fill its billets, the Army is promoting some officers faster and at higher rates than it has in the past and consequently reducing time at the captain level to learn and master their jobs and keeping officers who at other times would be forced to leave service due to performance. To illustrate this trend, the Army has reduced the time for promotion to captain from 48 months from commissioning in 1990 to an average of 38 months currently and is promoting 98 per cent of first lieutenants which is considerably higher than the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) stated goal of a 90% promotion rate. Similarly, promotion time to major is now 10 years vice the historical 12 years and the Army is promoting 97% of captains to major, again higher than the stated DOPMA goal of 80%. In fact the Army has exceeded the DOPMA promotion goals at almost every rank every year from at least FY 2001 through FY 20005. These high promotion rates particularly to MAJ and LTC, where in FY 2005 nearly 98% and 90% respectively were promoted in their first year of eligibility, were almost 20% above the DOPMA goal in each case. This statistic alone raises significant concerns about the quality of officers being selected for promotion, particularly at the field grade level where officers are groomed to lead and plan at the highest level.<sup>24</sup> Potentially, this may suggest that quality people are leaving vice mediocre/ poor performers. There are some

behavioral theories that suggest high quality officers are more likely to leave service than mediocre or lower quality officers. In other words those who contribute the most are likely to be the most sensitive to the perceived notion that the non-contributors are getting promoted at the same rate as the high producers and thus become disenfranchised with the organization. This is a direct result of higher promotion rates and manifests itself in higher attrition rates of quality officers.<sup>25</sup> (Lewis page 81) This may indicate why USMA graduates and ROTC scholarship recipients are leaving at high rates; and also gives credence to what Albert Hirschman says in *Exit Voice, and Loyalty*

If those who have the greatest influence on quality of output are also, as likely, more quality-conscious than the rest of the members, any slight deterioration in quality may set off their exit, which in turn will lead to further deterioration, which will lead to further exits, and so on.<sup>26</sup>

As late as last year the Army was still examining its junior officer retention problems. A Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB) was put into effect not only to address retention issues purely associated with the Iraq and Afghanistan, but also to compensate for the “grow the Army” initiative of increasing the end strength by 30,000.<sup>27</sup> Remember it takes roughly 4 months to make an enlisted soldier, not counting the recruiting, but it takes 3-5 years to produce a trained officer. As mentioned previously, transforming to a brigade centric army requires more captains and majors and proper accessions forecasting and retention planning was not exercised until after transformation was underway; coupled with the unanticipated long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the need to grow the Army, these officer shortages were compounded. This contributes mightily to the Army being stretched too thin and out of balance. To its credit the Army is taking steps to increase retention rates among the junior officer ranks. As LTG Rochelle indicates in his testimony to Congress in August 2007, “... the Army

developed a menu of options that is available to officers upon promotion to captain and prior to their completion of their initial ADSO. This menu provides officers with a choice of incentives in exchange for an additional 3 years of active duty service. Officers can elect assignment to get their post of choice or branch/functional area of choice; attend a military school or obtain language training, attend a full-funded graduate program; or receive a Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB).<sup>28</sup> The initial results of the menu of incentives is very encouraging, although those were not the results the Army expected in terms of cost and targeted population which it expected to affect. Based on survey results conducted earlier from independent contractor Chadwick, Martin, and Bailey for year groups 2002 through 2004, year groups who had not reached the end of their initial ADSO and who represented the bulk of the officers who the Army desired to impact; the most popular incentive should have been the fully funded graduate school option, followed by the CRSB. Initially there was only \$62 million dollars allocated to the graduate school program. The climate in 2007 did not allow for the menu of incentives to be offered to such a restricted population, rather senior leaders wanted to offer these incentives to a broader population of junior officers. After the program was restructured, the incentives were offered to captain year groups from 1999 thru 2004 making it more of a “we value your service” program rather than a true retention program focused on the needs of the Army. This resulted in a projected cost of \$460 million- more than seven times the programmed budget. In terms of numbers, the menu of incentives has been a resounding success; it remains to be seen if the numbers align with skill sets needed to achieve real success. Initial analysis and an interesting note is that when the Army took the 12 month wrap up data on all the takers of the bonus in

September 2008, and gave it to Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) to run a comparison between the intention of our takers to depart service (tracked in the DMDC semi-annual survey on the status of the force) and their actual behavior vis a vis actually taking an incentive and sticking around; the result was that among the large group of Army captains eligible for the incentives who also had responded to the DMDC surveys, 54% of them had indicated to DMDC that they either intended to leave service or were undecided about continuing a career, and of that 54%, 63% took an incentive obligation and are now committed through FY11. The Army expects the taker percentage among this group to rise to over 70% which is a great news story. What really happened is that the Army was able to extend the ADSO of over 15,400 takers. Unfortunately despite the earlier survey results, only several hundred actually opted for graduate education. Well over 94% took the cash. When all is said and done, despite the significant cost of this program, it will have made a significant difference in the retention behavior of a group of officers that the Army deemed critical to its successful transformation to modular forces. Given the dire predictions from the DMDC status surveys of a pending exodus from the mid grade officer ranks, the program at first glance has been a success. It remains to be seen what effect this experiment has on the future attitudes toward bonuses and compensation of our officer corps and the impact on retention in the future.<sup>29</sup>

LTG Rochelle in his address to Congress also talked about a new retention program that begins prior to commissioning, during the accession portion of the enterprise. He said again in his testimony before Congress, "... further the Army has implemented a pre-commissioning program in FY06, allowing Cadets to select a

branch, post or graduate school for an additional (active duty) service obligation of three years. This program has proven successful in just one year, with 1,100 officers participating in FY 06 and 1,600 expected to participate in FY 07. The Army expects this program to drop loss rates of both USMA graduates and ROTC scholarship recipients in FY 10 (by 702 officers total) when these officers would have completed their normal ADSO (4-years for ROTC scholarships and 5- years for USMA graduates). Now the Army will retain these officers through 7 and 8 years respectively.”<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, the Army must develop an enterprise strategy that focuses on the ends it hopes to achieve in regards to the composition of its officer corps in order to ensure it can successfully prosecute America’s conflicts, both now and in the future. The Army must have a synchronized, integrated strategy that focuses on the ways and means necessary to achieve that end. This enterprise strategy must encompass recruiting officer candidates, accessing new officers, and retaining officers in the proper quantity who have the appropriate skills and are trained sufficiently to win our country’s wars. The Army is making great strides in increasing accessions; it has invested heavily in providing the necessary resources and programs for retaining more officers; and each commissioning source invests a lot of resources in recruiting officer candidates; however there is still room for improvement and a need to integrate all these systems. The Army must be more proactive; it must work diligently to achieve an enterprise solution that seeks to integrate officer recruiting, accessions, and retention across all stake holders in order to achieve its desired ends.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, January 19, 2007), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>4</sup> Albert Eggerton, e-mail message to author, January 23, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, July 5, 2006), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> USCC Policy Memorandum 57-05, "United States Military Academy Branching Operations," policy memorandum, West Point, NY, September 1, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Eggerton, e-mail to author, December 9, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> LTG Michael Rochelle, "Recruiting and Retention," Congressional Testimony, February 15, 2007, 4.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Bryan Bender, "West Point grads exit service at high rate: War's redeployments thought a major factor," *The Boston Globe*, April 11, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Mark R. Lewis, "Army Transformation and the Junior Officer Exodus," *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 64-66.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin M. Badger, *Officer Attrition: Impact Of Combat Deployments And Compensation On Retention*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, May 26, 2004) 6.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Becker, "Struggling to Fill Ranks, Army Moves to Find Ways to Keep Its Officers," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, "Army Transformation and the Junior Officer Exodus," 81.

<sup>26</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 100.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Rochelle, "Recruiting and Retention," 3.

<sup>29</sup> Albert Eggerton, e-mail to author, December 9, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Rochelle, "Recruiting and Retention," 3.